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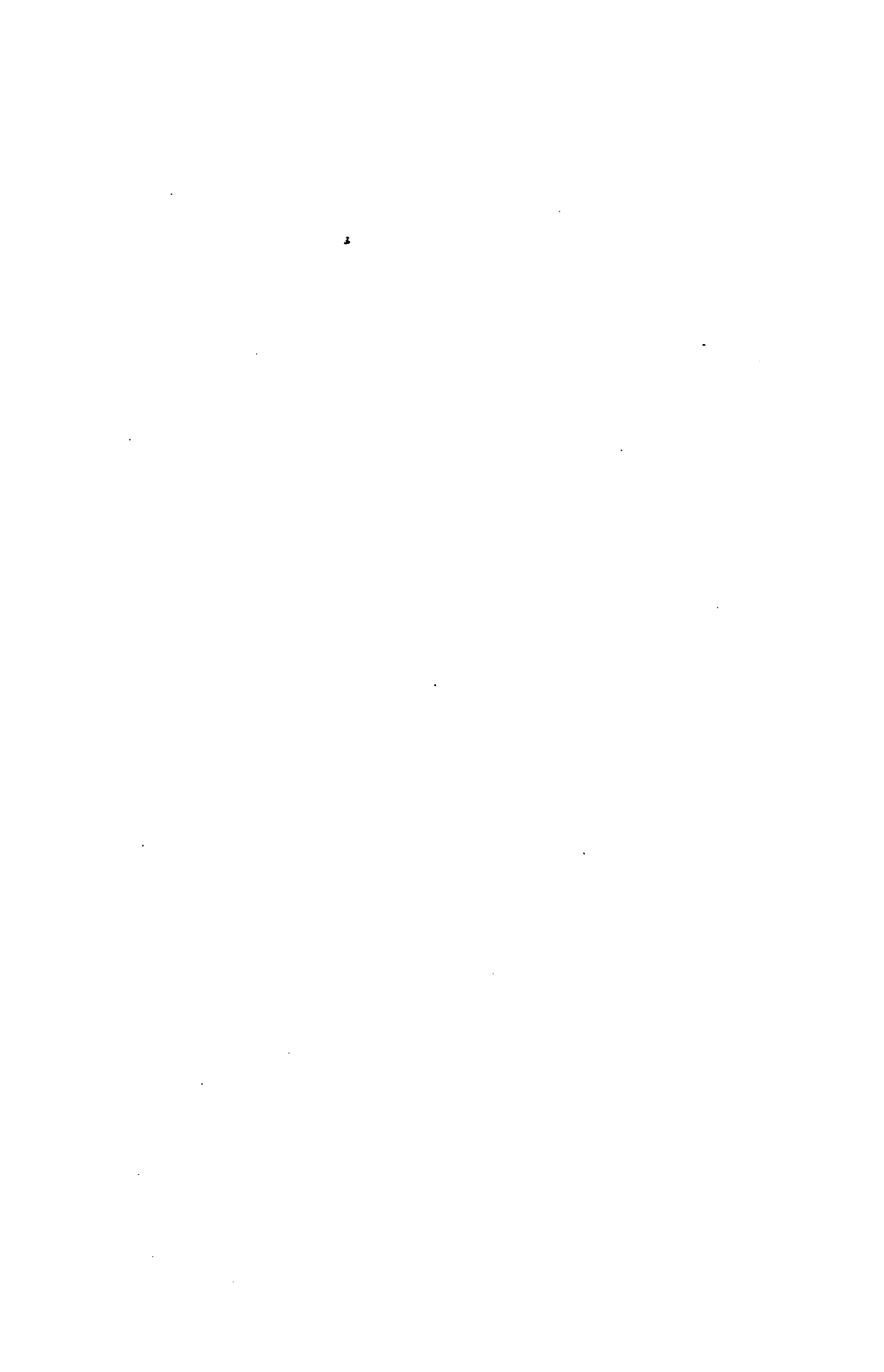






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## **The New Art of Writing Plays**



P U B L I C A T I O N S

*of the*

Dramatic Museum

OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

*First Series*

Papers on Playmaking:

- I THE NEW ART OF WRITING PLAYS. By Lope de Vega. Translated by William T. Brewster. With an Introduction and Notes by Brander Matthews.
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- IV ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AS A DRAMATIST. By Arthur Wing Pinero. With an Introduction and Bibliographical Appendix by Clayton Hamilton.

P A P E R S O N P L A Y - M A K I N G

I

The New Art of Writing Plays

BY

LOPE DE VEGA

TRANSLATED BY

WILLIAM T. BREWSTER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS



Printed for the

Dramatic Museum of Columbia University  
*in the City of New York*

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

**B**Y a significant coincidence the marvelous outflowing of the drama is simultaneous in Spanish literature and in English. Spain almost exhausted her immense resources in fitting out the invincible Armada; and England strained every nerve to compass the defeat of the dread fleet. Lope de Vega, the foremost of the Iberian playwrights, actually sailed as a soldier on the fatal voyage to the English channel; and it is dimly possible that Shakspeare also saw service on blue water; the year of the running sea fight is one of those in his biography about which we have no information, and his use of sea-terms has been declared by an expert to be scientifically accurate. In this simultaneous development of the drama in England and in Spain at the moment when the energy of the two peoples was aroused to the utmost, we have a confirmation of Brunetière's theory that the foundation of our pleasure in the playhouse is the assertion of the human will.

Shakspere came forward after the English drama had already developed a variety of forms; and he found the road broken for him by Marlowe and Kyd, by Lyly and Greene. At first he followed in their footsteps, however far beyond them he was to advance in the end. Lope de Vega, on the other hand, was a pioneer; he it was who blazed the new trails in which all the succeeding playwrights of Spain gladly trod. Shakspere seems to have cared little for invention, borrowing his plots anywhere and everywhere, and reserving his imagination for the interpretation of tales first told by others. Lope, on the other hand again, abounded rather in invention than in the interpreting imagination; he was wonderfully fecund and prolific, unsurpassed in productivity even by Defoe or Dumas. It was he who made the pattern that Calderon and all the rest were to employ. It was he who worked out the formula of the Spanish *comedia*, often not a comedy at all in our English understanding of the term, but rather a play of intrigue, peopled with hot-blooded heroes who wore their hearts on

their sleeves and who carried their hands on the hilts of their swords.

Where Lope de Vega and Shakspeare are again alike is that they both wrote all their plays for the popular theater, apparently composing these pieces solely with a view to performance and caring nothing for any praise which might be derived from publication. Martinenche, in his study of the 'Comedia Espagnole' (p. 243, note) dwells on Lope's carelessness for the literary renown to be won by the printing of his dramatic poems; in his non-dramatic poems he took pride, just as Shakspeare seems to have read carefully the proofs of his lyrical narratives altho he did not himself choose to publish a single one of his plays. And Molière, it may be noted, tells us frankly that he was completely satisfied with the success of his earlier pieces on the stage, and that he had been content to leave them unprinted until his hand was forced by a pirate-publisher.

Shakspeare is abundant in his allusions to the art of acting and reticent in his illusions to the art of playmaking. In fact, there is no single recorded expression of his opinion



in regard to the principles or the practice of dramaturgy; and here he is in marked contrast with Ben Jonson, who had a body of doctrine about the drama, which he set forth in his 'Discoveries' and in his prologs, as well as in his conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden. In general Lope's attitude toward dramaturgic theory is the same as Shakspeare's; but on one occasion he was induced to discuss the principles of the art he adorned, and to express his opinions upon its methods. This single occasion was when he was persuaded to deliver a poetic address upon the 'New Art of Making Plays in This Age.'

This 'Arte <sup>de</sup> nuevo de hazer comedias en este tiempo' was originally published in the 'Rimas' of Lope de Vega, Madrid, 1609. A facsimile reprint was issued by Mr. Archer M. Huntington in New York in 1903. A critical edition with an introduction and notes by A. Morel-Fatio appeared in the *Bulletin Hispanique* for October-December, 1904—and also in a separate pamphlet. The French editor accepts the year of publication as probably the year of delivery; and he believes the Academy of Madrid, before

whom the poem was read, to be "no doubt one of those literary assemblies, imitated from those flourishing in Italy and holding their meetings at the house of some cultivated gentleman."

Lope's metrical address is plainly a remote imitation of Horace's epistle to the Pisos, the model of countless critical codes cast into verse. It is the chief Spanish example of this type, as Boileau's 'Art Poétique' is the chief French example and Pope's 'Essay on Criticism' the chief English example. While most of these Horatian imitations have for their main topic poetry and more especially dramatic poetry, attempts were not lacking to borrow the familiar form for non-literary themes; and as a result there are a host of poems in all the modern tongues on the 'Art of War' and the 'Art of Painting,' on the 'Art of Bookbinding' and on the 'Art of Cookery.' Even so late as the first half of the nineteenth century Samson (of the Comédie-Française) condensed his histrionic advice into riming couplets on the 'Art of Acting.'

Most of those imitations of Horace's didactic poem which deal with poetry and the

drama borrow from the Latin lyricist not only their method but also much of their material. The supersubtle Italian theorists of the theater were relying on Horace even when they supposed that they were interpreting Aristotle; and these expounders of Horace had elaborated legislative enactments for the theater which were readily accepted by all who desired the purification of the drama. This Classicist code of rules for playwrights was mainly negative; it was made up largely of restrictions upon the poet's freedom; it ordered him to do a few things but it forbade him to do many things. It prescribed the total separation of tragedy and comedy, admitting nothing humorous into the former and excluding everything serious from the latter. It insisted severely upon the austere dignity of tragedy. It told the dramatist to avoid all scenes of violence; and it advised him to use messengers to narrate all events which might not be exhibited with propriety. Above all, it laid stress upon the strict observance of the Three Unities demanding that the playwright should have but one story to set on the stage; that he should show this single action in one place

only; and that this single action, shown in a single place, should be begun and completed in a single day.

Lope's 'New Art of Making Plays' is not a familiar epistle like Horace's 'Ars Poetica'; rather is it a familiar discourse having the playful ease of an afterdinner speech. It consists of a series of paragraphs of irregular length, varying from four to forty lines each. It is written in blank verse, hendecasyllabics, except that the last two lines of every paragraph are in rime. These terminal couplets recall the riming exit-speeches common in contemporary Elizabethan drama; and in both cases apparently the rimes serve to heighten the emphasis at the end of the rhetorical period. At the conclusion of his address, Lope drops into Latin and inserts ten lines in that tongue—ten lines of unidentified origin. These Latin verses may be his own composition or they may yet be traced to some overlooked poem. They are brought into harmony with the rest of the work by the ingenious device of riming the last Latin line with a line in Spanish, thus making a couplet half in the learned language and half in the vernacular. These two hybrid

lines are immediately followed by the usual terminal couplet, so that there are only three lines in Spanish after the ten lines of Latin. In the translation which follows the Latin verse has been rendered into English rime by Professor Edward Delavan Perry.

Professor Rennert in his authoritative biography of Lope (p. 179) declares that Lope's address "is written in a bantering spirit, and a vein of good humor pervades the whole poem. Lope evidently did not take the matter very seriously, nor reflect deeply on what he was about to say. It probably did not take him much longer to write the 'New Art of Making Plays' than it took him to write as many lines of a comedy. The versification, strangely enough, lacks Lope's habitual ease and fluency; it is careless and sometimes halting, while the sense is not always clear,—an additional sign that this treatise was hastily composed."

Morel-Fatio notes that the 'Arte Nuevo' was reprinted only three times during Lope's life-time, at Madrid in 1613 and 1621 and at Hueva in 1623; and he finds in the poem itself ample explanation for its lack of popularity. Lope was the superb leader of an

astounding development of the Spanish drama; and he himself tells us that when he delivered this address he had already written nearly five hundred plays. Yet he utters no paeon of triumph; he blows no bugle-blast of defiance to the defenders of other standards than those under which he himself was fighting; he does not anticipate the ardor and the fervor which were to animate Victor Hugo's preface to 'Cromwell'; he does not stand to his guns and point to what he has accomplished on the stage as his own justification and as a sufficient answer to the caviling of critics. His attitude seems to be humble and apologetic; he admits the validity of the Classicist code of rules; and in his own defence he proffers only what the lawyers call a plea of confession and avoidance, declaring that he would have obeyed the behest of the learned theorists if only he had been permitted by the public. He acknowledges the faultiness of all his dramatic works and throws the blame on the depravity of public taste, since

We who live to please, must please to live.

He supports his acceptance of the Classi-

cist doctrine with a brave show of erudition and with mention of Cicero, Donatus, Robortello, Julius Pollux, Manetti, Plutarch, Athenaeus, Xenophon, Valerus Maximus, Pietro Crinito and Vitruvius; and Morel-Fatio declares that this pedantic parade has no solid foundation of scholarship, being derived entirely from two writers, Donatus, the commentator on Terence, and Robortello, the commentator on Aristotle and on Horace. In this second-hand echoing of the codifiers of critical theory the great Spanish playwright reveals no independence of interpretation, accepting without question whatever he has found in the commentaries and never asking himself whether the commentators had any valid reason for the rules they laid down so authoritatively. In other words, the 'Arte Nuevo' does not disclose Lope's possession of any critical curiosity or of any critical acumen, or even of any real interest in the discussion of critical theories.

We have no right to expect that those as richly endowed with the creative faculty as Lope indisputably was, should also have an equal share of the critical faculty. The analysis of the principles of their own special

art by the poets and painters and playwrights who venture into the critical arena is always interesting but it is rarely philosophic and it is generally technical. And it is to technic that Lope devotes the most of his discourse. He trips lightly down the history of the new Spanish drama; and then he proceeds to bestow practical advice on aspiring young playwrights. He tells these novices that they must give the public what it wants, and he counsels them as to the best methods of tickling the taste of the uncritical playgoer. He descends to minute practical details; and, in short, his suggestions are those of a veteran of the craft supplying lessons in playwriting for a correspondence-school.

In so far as Lope lays down any critical principles at all, these are but the codification of his own instinctive practise. His address is like "the speech of a carpenter standing on the peak of a building he has just erected"—to borrow Richter's sarcastic phrase. Lope had himself succeeded as a practical playwright; and his plays had certain characteristics and were put together in a certain fashion. As these plays had pleased the public, beginners would do well



to consider these characteristics and to follow this fashion. He utters his shrewd recommendations most unpretentiously, with no hint of arrogance and with a friendly geniality of tone. Behind his modest precepts stand his own plays in which his ideal is more sharply made manifest. Lope's ideal is that of all his contemporaries, including Calderon (who followed in his footsteps and often borrowed his plots). It is that the stage is intended primarily for story-telling, for presenting in action a serial tale which shall excite the constant interest of curiosity.

He bids the beginner to put together his story with the utmost care, laying the foundations in the first act, contriving unexpected complications for the second and concealing the solution of the action until the very last moment possible, as otherwise the spectators may get up and go out, when once they can foresee the end. He lays all his stress upon adroitness and ingenuity of plot-building; and such casual remarks as he makes upon character-delineation seem perfunctory. In thus emphasizing the primary importance of the action Lope is only echoing Aristotle, —altho he probably was not aware of this.

And the practise of the Spanish playwrights under the lead of Lope was closely akin to that of their contemporaries, the English playwrights under the lead of Kyd, and again later under the lead of Beaumont and Fletcher. Like Lope, Kyd in his way and Beaumont and Fletcher in theirs, were storytellers on the stage. Poets they were all of them, but as playwrights they depended on plot, on suspense and especially on surprize—often achieved only by contradiction of character.

The abiding interest of the 'Arte Nuevo' is two-fold. It resides partly in the suggestiveness of the elementary lessons in the art of playmaking, which Lope here proffers to apprentices in the art and which are invaluable as an aid for proper appreciating the methods of the Spanish playwrights of the Age of Gold. It resides partly in the curiously deprecating attitude taken by Lope toward his own works, altho he was approaching the pinnacle of his fame when he penned this didactic poem. Is the great Spanish playwright sincere in his humility before the code of the Classicists? Is his self-abasement genuine—or is it ironic?

Morel-Fatio follows Menéndez y Pelayo in accepting it at its face value. Guillaume Huszar, in his useful book on Corneille and the Spanish theater, thinks that when Lope pretends to disparage his own plays he is not to be taken seriously. I confess that I should like to agree with this latter view; and there is some little internal evidence in support of it. But the balance is rather in favor of the former opinion. Yet however honest may be Lope's willingness to do penance to the Classicist code which he admits to have outraged, his is a proud humility after all. He is not really as abased and as plaintive as some of his critics have asserted. Modest as he may be, he takes care to make his own position plain. For all his easy attitude and his tolerant geniality, for all his lightness of touch on the one side and his pedantic citation on the other, he does not fail to insist on his authorship of nearly half a thousand plays and to remind his auditors that he has continuously succeeded in pleasing the public, even tho he had to violate the rules in order to win this success.

Lope assumes a detached attitude and his tone is bantering, as Professor Rennert has

suggested. He does not here display the intense personal interest in the analysis of his own work which glows and burns thru all Corneille's 'Examens,' in spite of the French dramatic poet's occasional confession of a lapse from the strict letter of the law. Lope has none of the prophetic fire of Hugo's famous preface in anticipatory defence of the plays he was going to write. In fact, it is difficult to deny that this poem is a pretty careless piece of work, tossed off in an idle hour, evoked by a special occasion when it behooved the speaker to assume a self-deprecatory attitude. But it is not the "lamentable palinode" that Menéndez y Pelayo called it; nor is it exactly what Mr. Ormsby termed it (in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1894) "virtually the manifesto of a triumphant dictator, a dramatic Napoleon who, while professing the profoundest respect for the sovereign will of the public, scarcely cared to hide his contempt for its intelligence or its taste, which foreign critics, he says, justly called barbarous; or to disguise the fact that he owed his power to his knowledge and adroit manipulation of its weaknesses." That scholars so well equipt

for the consideration of Spanish literature and so well fitted for the interpretation of the Spanish character as Ormsby and Rennert, Morel-Fatio and Menéndez y Pelayo can take views as conflicting as those severally expressed by them,—this is proof positive that Lope has not taken the pains necessary to make his position clear.

While Lope was willing at least to render lip-service to the code of the Classicists, one of his followers in the theater, Tirso de Molina, (best known as the author of the earliest dramatization of the Don Juan legend) in his 'Cigarrales de Toledo,' published in 1624, fifteen years after Lope's address, is bold in denying the validity of any rule limiting the duration of time or forbidding a change of scene, (See Breitunger's 'Unités d' Aristote' pp. 29 seq.) But Cervantes in the first part of 'Don Quixote,' published in 1605, four years before the delivery of the 'Arte Nuevo,' had revealed a plentiful lack of sympathy for the so-called Aristotelian rules. There is no disputing the irony in his portrait of the Canon of Toledo who demanded the appointment of "some intelligent and sensible person at the capital to examine

all plays before they were acted, not only those produced in the capital itself, but all that were intended to be acted in Spain; without whose approval, seal and signature, no local magistracy should allow any play to be acted." (Ormsby's translation, ii, 387, chapter xlviii). Earlier remarks of the Canon show us that he was familiar with whole Classicist code; indeed, Ormsby (in a foot-note to his translation of this chapter) calls attention to the substantial identity of the Canon's opinions with those expressed by Sir Philip Sidney in the 'Apology for Poesy.' In another work of fiction written more than two centuries later, in the 'Nicholas Nickleby' of Dickens, we are introduced to a Mr. Murdle whose knowledge is obviously vaguer than the Canon's but who is quite as strenuous in his insistence upon "the preservation of the unities."

Into the vexed question of the personal relations of Cervantes and of Lope, it is not needful to enter here. It would be pleasant to believe that each really appreciated the genius of the other; but however pleasant this is not quite possible. Cervantes seems not to have suspected the greatness of

his own masterpiece; and it is plain that he had a special fondness for his plays, which had not succeeded. Lope must have been conscious of his own position at the head of all Spanish poets; he might assume a humble attitude when he was the author of less than five hundred plays but by the time that he had more than a thousand pieces to his credit the garment of humility is no longer becoming. Martinenche in his 'Comedia Española' (pp. 113-4) follows Morel-Fatio in pointing out Lope's later satisfaction with what he had accomplished, even to the extent of claiming for himself the invention of the new type of play which had established itself on the Spanish stage.

When we consider the extraordinary vogue of Lope as a playwright in the Golden Age of Spanish literature and the swift diffusion of his fame thruout Europe, when we recall his unparalleled productivity, and when we remember his supreme importance as a representative of a superb development of the modern drama, we cannot fail to be surprised to discover that no adequate attempt has ever been made to present him to the English reading public. In French there

are two translations of selections from his dramatic works; and there are also varied renderings into German. But in English there is little or nothing. Lord Holland in 1787 analyzed the 'Star of Seville' and turned the more striking episodes into English; and it was on this summary and on these fragments that Mrs. Kemble founded her five act 'Star of Seville' published in 1837. Holcroft had utilized Lope's 'Padre Engañado' in the plot of his 'Father Outwitted,' published in 1805. A perversion of Lope's play on the 'Romeo and Juliet' story had been issued in English in 1770; and this moved F. W. Cosens to print (for private distribution) in 1869 a careful translation of 'Castelvines y Montreses'. In the sixth volume of 'The Drama,' edited by Alfred Bates and published in 1903, there is a translation of the 'Perro del Hortelano,' (the 'Gardener's Dog') by W. H. H. Chambers. These scattered versions and perversions apparently represent all of Lope's dramatic work which has found its way into our language. It is greatly to be desired that at least one volume might be issued in English to contain the 'Star of Seville,' the 'Gard-



**THE NEW ART OF MAKING PLAYS  
IN THIS AGE**

ener's Dog,' the 'Romeo and Juliet,' and the 'Duchess of Malfi' plays, and also the 'Physician of his own Honor,' and the 'Alcalde of Zalamea,' of which Calderon's rehandlings are already accessible in Fitzgerald's free rendering.

A few scattered passages from the 'Arte Nuevo' were turned into English couplets by Lord Holland; and some of those were borrowed (without credit) in G. H. Lewes's stimulating study of the Spanish Drama, issued in 1846. An inadequate and incomplete version, derived mainly from the French translation of Dumas-Hinard, was included in an essay on Lope published in the *Catholic World* for September, 1878. There is a careful abstract in Professor Rennert's standard biography of Lope (1904). But Professor Brewster's translation is the first attempt to render into English the whole of Lope's advice to the aspiring playwrights of his own time and country.

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

(June 1914.)

**THE NEW ART OF MAKING PLAYS  
IN THIS AGE**



THE NEW ART OF MAKING PLAYS  
IN THIS AGE

Addressed to the Academy at Madrid.

1. You command me, noble spirits, flower of Spain,—who in this congress and renowned academy will in short space of time surpass not only the assemblies of Italy which Cicero, envious of Greece, made famous with his own name, hard by the Lake of Avernus, but also Athens where in the Lyceum of Plato was seen high conclave of philosophers,—to write you an art of the play which is today acceptable to the taste of the crowd.

2. Easy seems this subject, and easy it would be for anyone of you who had written very few comedies, and who knows more about the art of writing them and of all these things; for what condemns me in this task is that I have written them without art.

3. Not because I was ignorant of the precepts; thank God, even while I was a tyro in grammar, I went through the books which

treated the subject, before I had seen the sun run its course ten times from the Ram to the Fishes;

4. But because, in fine, I found that comedies were not at that time, in Spain, as their first devisers in the world thought that they should be written; but rather as many rude fellows managed them, who confirmed the crowd in its own crudeness; and so they were introduced in such wise that he who now writes them artistically dies without fame and guerdon; for custom can do more among those who lack light of art than reason and force.

5. True it is that I have sometimes written in accordance with the art which few know; but, no sooner do I see coming from some other source the monstrosities full of painted scenes where the crowd congregates and the women who canonize this sad business, than I return to that same barbarous habit, and when I have to write a comedy I lock in the precepts with six keys, I banish Terence and Plautus from my study that they may not cry out at me; for truth, even in dumb books, is wont to call aloud; and I write in accordance with that art which they

devised who aspired to the applause of the crowd; for, since the crowd pays for the comedies, it is fitting to talk foolishly to it to satisfy its taste.

6. Yet true comedy has its end established like every kind of poem or poetic art, and that has always been to imitate the actions of men and to paint the customs of their age. Furthermore, all poetic imitation whatsoever is composed of three things, which are discourse, agreeable verse, harmony, that is to say music, which so far was common also to tragedy; comedy being different from tragedy in that it treats of lowly and plebeian actions, and tragedy of royal and great ones. Look whether there be in our comedies few failings.

7. *Auto* was the name given to them, for they imitate the actions and the doings of the crowd. Lope de Rueda was an example in Spain of these principles, and today are to be seen in print prose comedies of his so lowly that he introduces into them the doings of mechanics and the love of the daughter of a smith; whence there has remained the custom of calling the old comedies *entremeses*, where the art persists in all its force,

there being one action and that between plebeian people; for an *entremés* with a king has never been seen. And thus it is shown how the art, for very lowness of style, came to be held in great disrepute, and the king in the comedy to be introduced for the ignorant.

8. Aristotle depicts in his 'Poetics',—altho obscurely,—the beginning of comedy; the strife between Athens and Megara as to which of them was the first inventor; they of Megara say that it was Epicarmus, while Athens would have it that Magnes was the man. Elias Donatus says it had its origin in ancient sacrifices. He names Thespis as the author of tragedy,—following Horace, who affirms the same,—as of comedies, Aristophanes. Homer composed the 'Odyssey' in imitation of comedy, but the 'Iliad' was a famous example of tragedy, in imitation of which I called my 'Jerusalem' an epic, and added the term *tragic*; and in the same manner all people commonly term the 'Inferno,' the 'Purgatorio,' and the 'Paradiso' of the celebrated poet Dante Alighieri a comedy, and this Manetti recognizes in his prolog.

9. Now everybody knows that comedy,



as if under suspicion, was silenced for a certain time, and that hence also satire was born, which, being more cruel, more quickly came to an end, and gave place to the New Comedy. The choruses were the first things; then the fixt number of the characters was introduced; but Menander, whom Terence followed, held the choruses in despite, as offensive. Terence was more circumspect as to the principles; since he never elevated the style of comedy to the greatness of tragedy, which many have condemned as vicious in Plautus; for in this respect Terence was more wary.

10. Tragedy has as its argument history, and comedy fiction; for this reason it was called flat-footed, of humble argument, since the actor performed without buskin or stage. There were comedies with the *pallium*, mimes, comedies with the toga, *fabulae atellanae*, and comedies of the tavern, which were also, as now, of various sorts.

11. With Attic elegance the men of Athens chided vice and evil custom in their comedies, and they gave their prizes both to the writers of verse and to the devisers of action. For this Tully called comedies "the

mirror of custom and a living image of the truth,"—a very high tribute, in that comedy ran even with history. Look whether it be worthy of this crown and glory!

12. But now I perceive that you are saying that this is merely translating books and wearying you with painting this mixed-up affair. Believe me there has been a reason why you should be reminded of some of these things; for you see that you ask me to describe the art of writing plays in Spain, where whatever is written is in defiance of art; and to tell how they are now written contrary to the ancient rule and to what is founded on reason, is to ask me to draw on my experience, not on art, for art speaks truth which the ignorant crowd gainsays.

13. If then, you desire art, I beseech you, men of genius, to read the very learned Robortello of Udine and you will see in what he says concerning Aristotle and especially in what he writes about comedy, as much as is scattered among many books; for everything of today is in a state of confusion.

14. If you wish to have my opinion of the comedies which now have the upper hand and to know why it is necessary that the

crowd with its laws should maintain the vile chimera of this comic monster, I will tell you what I hold, and do you pardon me, since I must obey whoever has power to command me,—that, gilding the error of the crowd, I desire to tell you of what sort I would have them; for there is no recourse but to follow art observing a mean between the two extremes.

15. Let the subject be chosen and do not be amused,—may you excuse these precepts!—if it happens to deal with kings; tho, for that matter, I understand that Philip the Prudent, King of Spain and our lord, was offended at seeing a king in them; either because the matter was hostile to art or because the royal authority ought not to be represented among the lowly and the vulgar.

16. This is merely turning back to the Old Comedy, where we see that Plautus introduced gods, as in his 'Amphitryon' he represents Jupiter. God knows that I have difficulty in giving this my approbation, since Plutarch, speaking of Menander, does not highly esteem Old Comedy. But since we are so far away from art and in Spain do it

a thousand wrongs, let the learned this once close their lips.

17. Tragedy mixed with comedy and Terence with Seneca, tho it be like another minotaur of Pasiphae, will render one part grave, the other ridiculous; for this variety causes much delight. Nature gives us good example, for through such variety it is beautiful.

18. Bear in mind that this subject should contain one action only, seeing to it that the story in no manner be episodic; I mean the introduction of other things which are beside the main purpose; nor that any member be omitted which might ruin the whole of the context. There is no use in advising that it should take place in the period of one sun, tho this is the view of Aristotle; but we lose our respect for him when we mingle tragic style with the humbleness of mean comedy. Let it take place in as little time as possible, except when the poet is writing history in which some years have to pass; these he can relegate to the space between the acts, wherein, if necessary, he can have a character go on some journey; a thing that greatly of-

fends whoever perceives it. But let not him who is offended go to see them.

19. Oh! how lost in admiration are many at this very time at seeing that years are passed in an affair to which an artificial day sets a limit; tho for this they would not allow the mathematical day! But, considering that the wrath of a seated Spaniard is immoderate, when in two hours there is not presented to him everything from Genesis to the Last Judgment, I deem it most fitting, if it be for us here to please him, for us to adjust everything so that it succeeds.

20. The subject once chosen, write in prose, and divide the matter into three acts of time, seeing to it, if possible, that in each one the space of the day be not broken. Captain Virués, a worthy wit, divided comedy into three acts, which before had gone on all fours, as on baby's feet, for comedies were then infants. I wrote them myself. When eleven or twelve years of age, of four acts and of four sheets of paper, for a sheet contained each act; and then it was the fashion that for the three intermissions were made three little *entremeses*, but today scarce one, and then a dance, for the dancing is so

important in comedy that Aristotle approves of it, and Athenaeus, Plato, and Xenophon treat of it, though this last disapproves of indecorous dancing; and for this reason he is vexed at Callipides, wherein he pretends to ape the ancient chorus. The matter divided into two parts, see to the connection from the beginning until the action runs down; but do not permit the untying of the plot until reaching the last scene; for the crowd, knowing what the end is, will turn its face to the door and its shoulder to what it has awaited three hours face to face; for in what appears nothing more is to be known.

21. Very seldom should the stage remain without someone speaking, because the crowd becomes restless in these intervals and the story spins itself out at great length; for, besides its being a great defect, the avoidance of it increases grace and artifice.

22. Begin then, and, with simple language, do not spend sententious thoughts and witty sayings on family trifles, which is all that the familiar talk of two or three people is representing. But when the character who is introduced persuades, counsels or dissuades, then there should be gravity and wit;

for then doubtless is truth observed, since a man speaks in a different style from what is common when he gives counsel, or persuades, or argues against anything. Aristides, the rhetorician, gave us warrant for this; for he wishes the language of comedy to be pure, clear, and flexible, and he adds also that it should be taken from the usage of the people, this being different from that of polite society; for in the latter case the diction will be elegant, sonorous, and adorned. Do not drag in quotations, nor let your language offend because of exquisite words; for, if one is to imitate those who speak, it should not be by the language of Panchaia, of the Metaurus, of hippogriffs, demi-gods and centaurs.

23. If the king should speak, imitate as much as possible the gravity of a king; if the sage speak, observe a sententious modesty; describe lovers with those passions which greatly move whoever listens to them; manage soliloquies in such a manner that the recitant is quite transformed, and in changing himself, changes the listener. Let him ask questions and reply to himself, and if he shall make complaints, let him observe the re-

spect due to women. Let not ladies disregard their character, and if they change costumes, let it be in such wise that it may be excused; for male disguise usually is very pleasing. Let him be on ~~his~~ guard against impossible things, for it is of the chiefest importance that only the likeness of truth should be represented. The lackey should not discourse of lofty affairs, nor express the conceits which we have seen in certain foreign plays; and in no wise let the character contradict himself in what he has said; I mean to say, forget,—as in Sophocles one blames Oedipus for not remembering that he has killed Laius with his own hand. Let the scenes end with epigram, with wit, and with elegant verse, in such wise that, at his exit, he who spouts leave not the audience disgusted. ✓ In the first act set forth the case. In the second weave together the events, in such wise that until the middle of the third act one may hardly guess the outcome. Always trick expectancy; and hence it may come to pass that something quite far from what is promised may be left to the understanding. Tactfully suit your verse to the subjects being treated. *Décimas* are good for com-



plainings; the sonnet is good for those who are waiting in expectation; recitals of events ask for *romances*, though they shine brilliantly in *octavas*. *Tercets* are for grave affairs and *redondillas* for affairs of love. Let rhetorical figures be brought in, as repetition or anadiplosis, and in the beginning of these same verses the various forms of anaphora; and also irony, questions, apostrophes, and exclamations.

24. To deceive the audience with the truth is a thing that has seemed well, as Miguel Sánchez, worthy of this memorial for the invention, was wont to do in all his comedies. Equivoke and the uncertainty arising from ambiguity have always held a large place among the crowd, for it thinks that it alone understands what the other one is saying. Better still are the subjects in which honor has a part, since they deeply stir everybody; along with them go virtuous deeds, for virtue is everywhere loved; hence we see, if an actor chance to represent a traitor, he is so hateful to everyone that what he wishes to buy is not sold him, and the crowd flees when it meets him; but if he is loyal, they lend to him and invite him, and even the chief

men honor him, love him, seek him out, entertain him, and acclaim him.

25. Let each act have but four sheets, for twelve are well suited to the time and the patience of him who is listening. In satirical parts, be not clear or open, since it is known that for this very reason comedies were forbidden by law in Greece and Italy; wound without hate, for if, perchance, slander be done, expect not applause, nor aspire to fame.

26. These things you may regard as aphorisms which you get not from the ancient art, which the present occasion allows no further space for treating; since whatever has to do with the three kinds of stage properties which Vitruvius speaks of concerns the impresario; just as Valerius Maximus, Petrus Crinitus, Horace in his epistles, and others describe these properties, with their drops, trees, cabins, houses, and simulated marbles.

27. Of costume Julius Pollux would tell us if it were necessary, for in Spain it is the case that the comedy of today is replete with barbarous things: a Turk wearing the neck-gear of a Christian and a Roman in tight breeches.

28. But of all, nobody can I call more barbarous than myself, since in defiance of art I dare to lay down precepts, and I allow myself to be borne along in the vulgar current, wherefore Italy and France call me ignorant. But what can I do if I have written four hundred and eighty-three comedies, along with one which I have finished this week? For all of these, except six, gravely sin against art. Yet, in fine, I defend what I have written, and I know that, tho they might have been better in another manner, they would not have had the vogue which they have had; for sometimes that which is contrary to what is just, for that very reason, pleases the taste.

How Comedy reflects this life of man,  
How true her portraiture of young and old;  
How subtle wit, polished in narrow span,  
And purest speech, and more too you behold;  
What grave consideration mixed with smiles,  
What seriousness, along with pleasant jest;  
Deceit of slaves; how woman oft beguiles  
How full of slyness is her treacherous breast;  
How silly, awkward swains to sadness run,  
How rare success, though all seems well begun,

Let one hear with attention, and dispute  
not of the art; for in comedy everything will  
be found of such a sort that in listening to it  
everything becomes evident.

*(Translated by William T. Brewster.)*

## NOTES



## NOTES

1. The opening passage of Lope's poem is thus rendered into English verse by Lord Holland:—

Bright flow'rs of Spain, whose young academy  
Ere long shall that by Tully nam'd outvie;  
And match'd the Athenian porch where Plato  
taught,  
Whose sacred shades such throngs of sages sought,—  
You bid me tell the art of writing plays  
Such as the crowd might please, and you might  
praise,  
The work seems easy—easy it might be  
To you who write not much, but not to me.  
For how should I the rules of art explain,  
I, whom nor art nor rule should e'er restrain?  
Not but I studied all the antient rules:  
Yes, God be praised, long since in grammar schools,  
Scarce ten years old, with all the patience due,  
The books that subject treat I waded through:  
My case was simple,—in these latter days,  
The truant authors of our Spanish plays  
So wide had wander'd from the narrow road  
Which the strict fathers of the drama trod,  
I found the stage with barbarous pieces stor'd:—  
The critics censur'd; but the crowd ador'd.  
Nay more; these sad corrupters of the stage  
So blended taste, and so debauch'd the age,  
Who writes by rule must please himself alone,  
Be damn'd without remorse, and die unknown.

Such force has habit—for the untaught fools,  
 Trusting their own, despise the antient rules,  
 Yet, true it is, I too have written plays,  
 The wiser few, who judge with skill, might praise:  
 But when I see how shew and nonsense, draws  
 The crowd's, and, more than all, the fair's applause,  
 Who still are forward with indulgent rage  
 To sanction every monster of the stage.  
 I, doom'd to write, the public taste to hit,  
 Resume the barbarous dress 'twas vain to quit;  
 I lock up every rule before I write,  
 Plautus and Terence drive from out my sight,  
 Lest rage should teach these injur'd wits to join,  
 And their dumb books cry shame on works like  
     mine.  
 To vulgar standards then I square my play,  
 Writing at ease; for, since the public pay,  
 'Tis just, methinks, I by their compass steer,  
 And write the nonsense that they love to hear.

The two lines in which Lope declares that he locks up Plautus and Terence with six keys were quoted by Victor Hugo in the proclamation of his theories of dramatic art prefix to his unactable 'Cromwell' (1827). But Souriau in his annotated edition of the 'Préface de Cromwell' thinks it possible that Hugo may have borrowed the quotation second-hand from a pamphlet by Scudéry, 'La Preuve des Passages' put forth during the quarrel over Corneille's 'Cid.' It is amusing to note that M. Emile Faguet, quoting these lines in his 'Drame Ancien, Drame Moderne'



(p. 122) inadvertently credits them to Cervantes.

Fitzgerald, in the preface to his translations from Calderon, asserts that certain of the defects discoverable in these pieces do not represent "Calderon's own better self, but concession to private haste or public taste by one who so often relied upon some striking dramatic crisis for success with a not very accurate audience." It may be objected that this plea is dangerous in that it is based on the unwarrantable assumption that Calderon's private taste was different from that of the public to which he appealed; but it can be urged in behalf of Lope as potently as in behalf of Calderon. Lope's own plea that he must give the public what it wants is more effectively put by Molière, in the preface to the *'Précieuses Ridicules'*; "I should needlessly offend all Paris, if I accused it of having applauded a piece of stupidity; as the public is the absolute judge of works of this sort, it would be impertinent in me to contradict it; and even if I had the worst possible opinion of my *'Précieuses'* before the performance, I ought now to believe that it has some value, since so many persons together have spoken well of it."

6. Morel-Fatio points out that this paragraph is practically a literal translation from Robortello's *'Paraphrases in libram Horatii*

De Comedia.' It is mainly from Robortello that Lope derives all his parade of erudition.

8. In this paragraph, as Morel-Fatio informs us, Lope is again relying on Robortello and also on Donatus.

9. At the end of this paragraph Lope, following Donatus blindly, attributes to Terence the loftiness of style to which Plautus occasionally attained. As Damas-Hinard noted in his French translation of certain of Lope's plays, the Spanish poet is here sinning against light, since he had a first-hand knowledge of the comedies of both the Latin dramatists.

15. Professor Rennert (p. 180) points out that this distinction between tragedy and comedy is arbitrary and un-Aristotelian, altho it was "the one that obtained thruout the Renascence and down to the end of the period of Classicism." It was the doctrine of Robortello and of the later Italian theorists that it was "the rank of the characters, and this only, which distinguished a tragedy from a comedy." This is the distinction which Sir Philip Sidney maintains in his 'Defence of Poesy.'

Here is Lord Holland's metrical version of the concluding lines of this passage:

Once to behold a monarch on the stage,  
England, 'tis said, our prudent Philip's rage;  
Or that he deem'd such characters unfit

For lively sallies and for comic wit;  
Or crowns debas'd, if actors were allow'd  
To bring the state of kings before a low-born crowd.

In his 'Hamburg Dramaturgy,' (p. 394-5 of the English version in Bohn's series) Lessing translates a score of these lines, ending with Lope's assertion that nature has set us the example of commingling the ludicrous with the serious; and then he asks: "Is it true that nature sets us an example of the common and the sublime, the farcical and the serious, the merry and the sad? It seems so. But if this is true, Lope has done more than he intended; he has not only glossed over the faults of his stage, he has really proved that these are no faults, for nothing can be a fault that is an imitation of nature." But Mezières in the introduction he prefixt to the French translation of Lessing's dramatic criticism quotes a passage from Diderot on the danger of uniting tragedy and burlesque: "Tragicomedy is never be more than a bad species, because in it are confounded two disparate species, separated by a natural barrier." Here Lessing, who had derived so much from Diderot, reveals himself as in advance and on firmer ground than his French contemporary. It is amusing to note that Diderot, so often hailed as a forerunner of the Romantics, is here a belated echo of so strict a classicist as Sir Philip Sidney

who asserted that the plays he saw on the English stage were "neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling Kings and Clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in Clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in magestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion: So as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness is by their mongrel Tragicomedy attained."

16. Morel-Fatio notes that this passage also is derived directly from Robortello.

17. These lines Lord Holland turns into English couplets:

The tragic with the comic muse combin'd,  
Grave Seneca with sprightly Terence join'd,  
May seem, I grant, Pasiphaë's monstrous birth,  
Where one half moves our sorrow, one our mirth.  
But sweet variety must still delight,  
And, spite of rules, dame Nature says we're right,  
Thru' all her works she this example gives,  
And from variety her charms derives.

With this statement of Lope's may be compared the theory set forth by Victor Hugo in the preface to 'Cromwell.'

19. Here once more, as Morel-Fatio has shown, Lope is leaning upon Robortello. Three and a half lines of this passage Lord Holland translates freely in this triplet:

Who seated once, disdain to go away,

Unless in two short hours they see the play  
Brought down from Genesis to judgment day.

This popular liking for the whole story without selection or omission is a survival from the middle ages when the mystery play began with Genesis and ended, if not with judgment day, at least with the casting of the wicked into Hell-Mouth. To the Classicists this prolongation of the action was always most offensive. Lord Holland turned into English the four lines in which Boileau denounces the custom :

The Spanish bard, who no nice censure fears,  
In one short day includes a lapse of years.  
In those rude acts the hero lives so fast,  
Child in the first, he's greybeard in the last.

And Sir Philip Sidney had earlier expressed his disgust for this license, blaming the English playwrights for their liberal allowance of time, "for ordinary it is that two young Princes fall in love. After many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth up a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours' space: which how absurd it is in sense even sense may imagine, and Art hath taught, and all ancient examples justified." With this may be compared Corneille's opinions in his 'Discourse on the

Three Unities' and in his discussion of his own 'Mélite.'

Lope's limitation of the duration of performance is exactly equivalent to Shakspeare's "two hours traffic of the stage." But Shack, and after him Morel-Fatio, adduce evidence that the customary stay of the spectators in the Spanish theaters was two hours and a half.

20. Lope's advice, that a play should first be written in prose to be turned later into verse, Menéndez y Pelayo believes to be borrowed from a passage in Vida's Latin poem on the poetic art,—a passage thus rendered in English in Pitt's translation:

At first without the least restraint compose  
And mold the future poem with prose,  
A full and proper series to maintain  
And draw the just connection in a chain.  
By stated bounds your progress to control,  
To join the parts and regulate the whole.

Morel-Fatio thinks this very likely, since Lope was familiar with Vida's work. Oddly enough, the principle Lope here lays down was not in accord with his own practise, since the state of the existing manuscripts seems to show that he composed originally in verse, altho on occasion he drew up a preliminary scenario in prose. It may be noted that the method here recommended by Lope was that actually adopted by Molière, who (in his

haste to meet the wishes of Louis XIV) had to call on Corneille to versify more than half of the 'Psyché' which he had completely constructed in prose and which he had not been able wholly to turn into verse within the limits of time set by the king.

Lord Holland thus renders certain lines of this paragraph into English couplets:

Plays of three acts we owe to Virues' pen,  
Which ne'er had crawled but on all fours till then;  
An action suited to that helpless age,  
The infancy of wit, the childhood of the stage.  
Such plays not twelve years old did I complete,  
Four sheets to every play, an act on every sheet.

And Ticknor also employs the rimed couplet for his translation of a longer passage:

The Captain Verues, a famous wit,  
Cast dramas in three acts, by happy hit;  
For, till his time, upon all fours they crept,  
Like helpless babes that never yet had stept.  
Such plays I wrote, eleven and twelve years old;  
Four acts—each measured to a sheet's just fold—  
Filled out four sheets; while still, between,  
Three *entremeses* short filled up the scene.

But Camille de Senne and Guillot de Saxe in the preface of their study of the 'Star of Seville' (Paris, 1913, p. 44, note) assert that the three-act form had established itself in the Spanish theater half a century anterior to Verues. And Lessing in his 'Hamburg Dramaturgy' (Dec. 4th, 1767) had pointed

out the discrepancy between Lope's assigning the credit of this change to Verues and Calderon's claim, (in the preface to his comedies), that he was the first to make this reduction.

If Lope had been familiar with Aristotle he might have justified the three-act form as simply the carrying out the Greek critic's principle that a play must have an action with a beginning, a middle and an end.

As Attic tragedies were acted without any intermission they had only a single prolonged act,—altho a trilogy was a story shown in three acts. Yet the traditional five-act form of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is indirectly derived from the Athenian drama, wherein the number of choral passages came in time to be limited to four, separating five passages in dialog, which when the lyric interludes were omitted, stood forth as five separate acts. Horace, probably following the precepts of the Alexandrian critics, prescribes five acts (see Weil's *'Etudes sur le Drame Antique,'* p. 325). The MSS. of Latin comedy show no division into acts (see Fairclough's edition of Terence's *'Andria,'* pp. lii, liii,). It may be noted that as soon as the five-act form was disestablished the tendency of the leading modern dramatists has been to adopt the logical three-act form. Most of Ibsen's so-



cial dramas are in three acts, just as Lope's are.

Commenting on Lope's strange prescription of the number of pages a comedy should have, Professor Rennert (p. 163, note) tells us that "this rule, as to the length of the *comedia*, which Lope here lays down, was carefully followed by all the other dramatists of the time, and deviations from it are rare. Four sheets—sixteen leaves for each act, that is forty-eight leaves to a *comedia*. An examination of Lope's autograph plays shows how strictly he adhered to this rule. Where slight variations are found they are due to the difference in the size of the leaves—the *comedia* always consisting of about three thousand lines. . . . On the other hand, the comedies of Miguel Sanchez, a predecessor of Lope, contain about four thousand lines."

Lope, like his fellow dramatists Calderon and Corneille, Molière, Voltaire and Goldoni, had been a pupil of the Jesuits; and it was doubtless when he was a youthful student of the Jesuit school in Madrid that he became acquainted with the critical theories of the Italian commentators of Horace and Aristotle.

21. The rule forbidding the dramatist ever to leave the stage empty Morel-Fatio traces to a passage in Donatus dealing with

the omission of the chorus from the New Comedy of the Greeks. Altho Corneille does not expressly discuss this rule, he obeyed it; and it was generally obeyed by all the French dramatists who accepted the Classicist theory, possibly because the leaving of the stage empty became the conventional signal of the end of the act. Even today at the Théâtre Français, the curtain does not always fall on the termination of an act; the stage is left unoccupied for a moment and then the three raps of the wooden hammer are heard, whereupon the characters enter who are to begin the next act. On the English-speaking stage this rule has never established itself; and our dramatic poets have now and again achieved an effect of expectancy by leaving the stage bare and letting the spectators wonder who is next to appear.

23. A part of this paragraph is turned into English couplets by Lord Holland:

In ten line staves should wailing grief be shown;  
The sonnet suits a man who speaks alone;  
Let plain narration flow in ballad lines;  
Though much a tale in copious *octaves* shines;  
Grand weighty thoughts the triplet should contain  
But *redondillas* suit the lover's strain.

In the introduction to his 'Select Plays of Calderon' Norman Maccoll gives a clear explanation of the various sorts of verse that Lope mentions here:—*Romances* are "octo-

syllabic trochaics—the customary measure of the Spanish ballads. As in the ballads, these trochaics are sometimes rimed and sometimes assonant. *Redondillas* are arranged in strophes of four lines each. Strong endings and weak endings are both employed. The first and fourth lines rime together, and so do the second and third. This is the simplest of the riming measures in common use. . . . *Quintillas* are arranged in strophes of five lines each. The only rule observed in the riming is that the same rime must not occur in more than two successive lines. . . . The *Decima* is a combination of two *quintillas* in one strophe of ten lines. The arrangement of rimes is as follows: the first five are disposed . . . a, b, b, a, a, and the second five are arranged c, c, d, d, e. . . . Three other forms of iambic verse are borrowed from the Italians, the *Terceto* (the *terza rima* of the Italians), the *Octava* (or *ottava rima*) and the Sonnet." Maccoll in his turn renders several of Lope's lines into English rimes:

In *décimas* finds voice the mourner's wail;  
 The sonnet's fitted for the action's stay;  
*Romances* serve to tell the player's tale.  
 Yet octaves well can stirring news convey;  
 While deed of high import in *terzas* shines,  
 And *redondillas* are the lover's lines.

The incessant employment of these var-

ious lyric measures is evidence, were any needed, of the prevailing lyrical quality of the dialog of the Spanish drama when Lope and Calderon were its chiefs. It may be noted that in 'Prunella, a Fantasy in Three Acts,' by Lawrence Hausman and Granville Barker, the authors emphasize the lyrical element in their rococo story by scattering riming stanzas at irregular intervals thruout the dialog.

That the sonnet with its artificial and arbitrary scheme of intricately interlaced rimes should be intercalated into dramatic dialog may seem to modern readers a strange suggestion. Yet Lope was here only recommending a practise inherited from the mediaeval mysteries wherein various fixt forms of verse were frequently employed. Their stanzaic rigidity did not prevent the deviser of a French passion-play from utilizing the triolet, the ballade, and even the long-sustained and stately chant-royal; and the playwright availed himself of their aid not only in passages of lyrical emotion but also in the swift give and take of the intenser dramatic moments of the action. This tradition of the religious pieces was taken over by the founders of the secular drama in most of the modern languages,—in English as well as in French and in Spanish. Corneille's first play 'Mélite' was composed especially to bring in

a sonnet; and even as late as the 'Cid' Corneille cast his lyrical monologs into stanzas, for which he was censured by the Abbé d' Aubignac and by Voltaire; and Brunetière (in his annotated edition of Corneille's more important plays) likens the lyrical soliloquy of Rodrigue at the end of the first art to the bravura solo of a tenor, coming down to the footlights with his hand on his heart (p. 69). Shakspeare used the looser Elizabethan sonnet for the prolog to 'Romeo and Juliet' spoken by Chorus; and Ben Jonson employs it for the Prolog for the Court of his 'Staple of News.' The incongruity of the fixt form is least obvious when the sonnet is thus kept outside the play itself and when it is utilized only in the address to the audience before the action begins. But Shakspeare did not hesitate to employ this fixt form inside the play; in 'Love's Labor's Lost' (act iii, scene 2) and also in 'All's Well that ends Well' (act iii, scene 4) he casts a letter into fourteen lines, with three riming quatrains and a terminal couplet. And again in 'Romeo and Juliet' where hero and heroine meet and fall in love at first sight, the lyrical significance of this meeting is suggested by the employment of the fourteener, Romeo speaking the first quatrain, Juliet the second, while the third quatrain and the final couplet are shared between them, each taking in turn a line or

two. M. Rostand prefixes a sonnet to every act of his 'Chantecler,' utilizing them for a poetical description of the successive sets in which the action of his lyrical play is supposed to take place.

The ballade is to be found in two nineteenth century French plays, the 'Gringoire' of Théodore de Banville, and the 'Cyrano de Bergerac' of Rostand; but in both these pieces it is frankly presented as what it is,—a poem composed in the fixt form by the hero of the play. Maccoll suggests that sonnets were introduced by the Spanish playwright "to please the more cultivated part of the audience"; and he remarks that "from their nature [they] could be employed sparingly—not more than two or three sonnets were usually put into a play." He notes that in one of Calderon's pieces, 'Gustos y Disgustos' a duenna who is in doubt as to her immediate duty, begins her speech "by saying that she must either indulge in a soliloquy or pronounce a sonnet. She elects the former, and proceeds to soliloquize in *redondillas*."

28. Lord Holland has turned these lines into English couplets:

None than myself more barbarous or more wrong,  
Who hurried by the vulgar taste along,  
Dare give my precepts in despite of rule.  
When France and Italy pronounce me fool.  
But what am I to do? who now of plays,

With one complete within these seven days,  
Four hundred eighty-three in all have writ,  
And all, save six, against the rules of wit.

It needs to be recorded that Lope's commentators have been sadly put to it in their endeavor to identify the half dozen of Lope's plays which he here claims to be in accord with the theories of the Classicists.

Attention has been called also to the similarity of attitude between Lope here and that taken by Webster in the preface to his 'White Devil,' published in 1612, only three years after the Spanish poem had been delivered:—"If it be objected that this is no true Dramatic Poem, I shall easily confess it; *non potes in nugis dicere plura meas Ipse ego quam dixi*; willingly, and not ignorantly, in this kind have I faulted; for should a man present to such an Auditory the most contentious Tragedy that ever was written, observing all the critical laws, as height of style and gravity of person, enrich it with the sententious chorus, and, as it were, life 'n Death in the passionate and weighty Nuntius, yet after all this divine rapture, *O dura messorum illa*, the breath that comes from the incapable multitude is able to poison it; and ere it be acted, let the author resolve to fix to every scene this of Horace,

*Haec Porcis hodie comedenda relinques."*

B. M.

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